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In re Application of :
Hinton, et al. :
Application No. 09/583,406 : DECISION
Filed: 31 May, 2000 :
Attorney Docket No. AUS919990922US1 :
:

This is a decision on the petition filed on 23 October, 2006, to revive an application under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) as having been abandoned due to unintentional delay.

The Office regrets the delay in addressing the instant matter, however, the petition was presented to the attorneys in the Office of Petitions only at this writing.

It appears that the Power of Attorney filed of record on 31 October, 2006, has been entered.

The petition as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) is **GRANTED**.

BACKGROUND

The record reflects that:

- Petitioner failed to reply timely and properly to a non-final Office action mailed on 9 February, 2005, with reply due absent extension of time on or before 9 May, 2005;
- the application went abandoned by operation of law after midnight 9 May, 2005;

- the Office mailed the Notice of Abandonment on 7 February, 2006;
- on 23 October, 2006, Petitioner submitted the instant petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) with fee and reply in the form of an amendment, and made the statement of unintentional delay—it is noted that while the Office action was mailed to what was then the associate of the Power of Attorney, Petitioner herein, Jeffrey S. Labaw (Reg. No. 31,633) has been authorized Counsel from the outset of prosecution of the instant application, and therefore also was/is in a position to make the statement of unintentional delay.

The availability of applications and application papers online to applicants/practitioners who diligently associate their Customer Number with the respective application(s) now provides an applicant/practitioner on-demand information as to events/transactions in an application. Thus, now if one wishes to know the progress in and/or status of an application or the accuracy of the data therein, one need only look at the file online.

Out of an abundance of caution, Petitioners always should note that those registered to practice *and* all others who make representations before the Office are reminded to inquire into the underlying facts of representations made to the Office and support averments with the appropriate documentation—since all owe to the Office the continuing duty to disclose.¹

STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Congress has authorized the Commissioner to "revive an application if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." 35 U.S.C. §133 (1994).²

The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) and (b) set forth the requirements for a petitioner to revive a previously unavoidably or unintentionally, respectively, abandoned application under this congressional grant of authority. The language of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is clear, unambiguous, and without qualification: the delay in tendering the reply to the outstanding Office action, as well as filing the first petition seeking revival, must have been unavoidable for the reply now to be accepted on petition.

Delays in responding properly raise the question whether delays are unavoidable. Where there is a question whether the delay was unavoidable, Petitioners must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).³

¹ See supplement of 17 June, 1999. The Patent and Trademark Office is relying on petitioner's duty of candor and good faith and accepting a statement made by Petitioner. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53160 and 53178, 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 88 and 103 (responses to comments 64 and 109)(applicant obligated under 37 C.F.R. §10.18 to inquire into the underlying facts and circumstances when providing statements to the Patent and Trademark Office).

² See: In re Application of G, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989).

³ See: Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53158-59 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 86-87 (October 21, 1997).

And the Petitioner must be diligent in attending to the matter.⁴ Failure to do so does not constitute the care required under Pratt, and so cannot satisfy the test for diligence and due care.

(By contrast, unintentional delays are those that do not satisfy the very strict statutory and regulatory requirements of unavoidable delay, and also, by definition, are not intentional.⁵)

As to Allegations
of Unintentional Delay

The requirements for a grantable petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) are the petition and fee, a proper reply, a statement/showing of unintentional delay, and—where appropriate—a terminal disclaimer and fee.

Petitioner appears to have satisfied the requirements under the regulation.

CONCLUSION

The instant petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) is **granted**.

The instant application is released to Technology Center/AU 2135 for further processing in due course.

⁴ See: Diligence in Filing Petitions to Revive and Petitions to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment, 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 33 (March 19, 1991). It was and is Petitioner's burden to exercise diligence in seeking either to have the holding of abandonment withdrawn or the application revived. See 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office *supra*.

⁵ Therefore, by example, an unintentional delay in the reply might occur if the reply and transmittal form are to be prepared for shipment by the US Postal Service, but other pressing matters distract one's attention and the mail is not timely deposited for shipment.

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While telephone inquiries regarding this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3214, it is noted that all practice before the Office is in writing (see: 37 C.F.R. §1.2⁶) and the proper authority for action on any matter in this regard are the statutes (35 U.S.C.), regulations (37 C.F.R.) and the commentary on policy (MPEP). Therefore, no telephone discussion may be controlling or considered authority for Petitioner's action(s).



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Office of Petitions

⁶ The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.2 provide:
§1.2 Business to be transacted in writing.

All business with the Patent and Trademark Office should be transacted in writing. The personal attendance of applicants or their attorneys or agents at the Patent and Trademark Office is unnecessary. The action of the Patent and Trademark Office will be based exclusively on the written record in the Office. No attention will be paid to any alleged oral promise, stipulation, or understanding in relation to which there is disagreement or doubt.